

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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IO-13 AID-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 HA-05 /090 W

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4246

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJ: MARCOS PRESS CONFERENCE WITH FOREIGN MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

1. SUMMARY: IN WIDE-RANGING BUT UNREMARKABLE PRESS CONFERENCE WITH FOREIGN MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES APRIL 12 PRESIDENT MARCOS DISPUTED SERIOUSNESS OF CHARGES OF ELECTION IRREGULARITIES, REPEATED COMPLAINTS OF FOREIGN MEDDLING IN PHILIPPINE AFFAIRS AND REVEALED THAT CABINET LEVEL OFFICIALS BELIEVE US BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES ARE OF GREATER VALUE TO US THAN THE PHILIPPINES. HE INDICATED THE FORMATION OF THE INTERIM BATASANG PAMBANSA (IBP) REMOVED A LEGAL IMPEDIMENT TO THE LIFTING OF MARTIAL LAW. DESPITE RANCOR WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED PHILIPPINE FOREIGN PRESS RELATIONS FOR LAST SEVERAL WEEKS, MARCOS WAS RELAXED AND PRESS CONFERENCE WAS RELATIVELY INFORMAL. END SUMMARY.

2. DESPITE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT CHARGES OF DISTORTED COVERAGE OF INTERIM BATASANG PAMBANSA (IBP) ELECTIONS BY FOREIGN MEDIA, PRESIDENT MARCOS MET WITH FOREIGN REPORTERS FOR 90-MINUTE PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 12. QUESTIONS OF ELECTION IRREGULARITIES AND FOREIGN INTERFERENCE DOMINATED THE SESSION. PRESIDENT MARCOS ADMITTED THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN IRREGULARITIES IN ELECTIONS, BUT INSISTED THAT THESE

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OCCURRENCES CERTAINLY WOULD NOT AFFECT THE FINAL OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION. TO DECLARE THE ELECTION FRAUDULENT BECAUSE OF MINOR IRREGULARITIES, HE CLAIMED, "IS GOING TOO FAR." MARCOS CHARGED THE LABAN PARTY RESORTED TO BRIBERY, USE OF "FLYING VOTERS" AND INTIMIDATION OF KBL VOTERS AND POINTED TO MANILA SUBURB OF PASIG, WHERE KBL CANDIDATES WERE DEFEATED, AND AN EXAMPLE OF AN AREA IN WHICH

LABAN PARTY RESORTED TO ILLEGAL TACTICS.

3. PRESIDENT STATED THE FORMATION OF IBP HAS LIFTED A SIGNIFICANT OBSTACLE TO THE ENDING OF MARTIAL LAW. PROCESS OF NORMALIZATION, HE EXPLAINED, COULD NOT CONTINUE WITHOUT THE EXISTENCE OF A BODY TO ASSUME THE LEGISLATIVE FUNCTIONS WHICH ARE NOW THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRESIDENT. MARCOS STATED THE COUNTRY IS NOW SHIFTING TO A MIXED PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT AND HE PROMISED THAT "WE ARE GOING TO RETURN TO NORMALCY."

4. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION REGARDING THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS OF APRIL 6 AND APRIL 9, MARCOS CHARACTERIZED THE OPPOSITION PARTY'S APRIL 6 "NOISE DEMONSTRATION" AS A "RIOT." HE CLAIMED HE PERMITTED THE DEMONSTRATION DESPITE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE AND POLICE WARNINGS OF POSSIBLE VIOLENCE. HE STATED THE DEMONSTRATION BLOCKED TRAFFIC FOR FOUR HOURS, THAT DEMONSTRATORS DESTROYED SEVERAL PRIVATE VEHICLES DISPLAYING KBL BUMPER STICKERS, THAT SEVERAL DRIVERS WERE BEATEN AFTER REFUSING TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE NOISE, AND THAT A GIRL WAS RUN OVER AND KILLED DURING THE COURSE OF THE DEMONSTRATION. HE INDICATED THERE WERE ALSO REPORTS OF FIREARMS BEING DISCHARGED DURING THE PERIOD. GIVEN THIS PRECEDENT, POLICE MOVED SWIFTLY TO HALT THE APRIL 9 MARCH. MARCOS CLAIMED HE WAS NOT CONSULTED PRIOR TO POLICE ACTION APRIL 9 WHICH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RESULTED IN OVER 500 ARRESTS, INCLUDING THOSE OF FOUR LABAN CANDIDATES. MARCOS STATED HIS SECURITY ADVISERS DID NOT WANT TO RELEASE ANY OF THE DEMONSTRATORS PRIOR TO TRIAL, BUT WERE WILLING TO ACCEPT HIS COMPROMISE SUGGESTION THAT THE DEMONSTRATORS BE RELEASED WHILE THE LEADERS CONTINUE TO BE HELD. HE SUGGESTED THAT MANY OF THE DEMONSTRATORS WERE NOT AWARE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THEIR ACTIONS AND THEREFORE SHOULD NOT BE HEAVILY PENALIZED. MARCOS REVEALED HE IS RECOMMENDING THAT THE TRIALS OF THE LEADERS BE CONDUCTED IN CIVIL COURTS SO THAT THEY MAY HAVE ACCESS TO BAIL. MARCOS REFUSED TO BE PINNED DOWN WHEN ASKED IF THE GOVERNMENT WOULD APPROVE REQUEST FOR PERMITS FOR FUTURE OPPOSITION RALLIES. HE INDICATED THIS WILL BE UP TO THOSE OFFICIALS IMMEDIATELY CONCERNED WITH THE GRANTING OF PERMITS.

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5. WHEN ASKED TO CITE SPECIFIC INSTANCES OF INTERVENTION BY THE US OR OTHER FOREIGN POWERS IN THE ELECTION, MARCOS AGAIN REFUSED TO BE SPECIFIC, STATING THAT PHILIPPINE CHARGES REFERRED TO "INTERVENTION IN GENERAL." HE CITED AS AN EXAMPLE WHAT HE CHARACTERIZED AS THE DEMANDS OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY DERIAN THAT SENATOR AQUINO BE RELEASED FROM JAIL AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT PERMIT AN OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER TO BE PUBLISHED. HE STATED THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT PERCEIVES DERIAN'S "DEMANDS" AS AN "INTERVENTION ON OUR AFFAIRS." MARCOS REFERRED AS WELL TO THE GOP CHARGES THAT TWO JAPANESE NATIONALS SPOKE AT LABAN RALLIES AND THAT SEVERAL FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS ASSISTED IN PLANNING THE APRIL 6 NOISE DEMONSTRATION.

6. THOUGH CLAIMING TO HAVE AN OPEN MIND ON THE QUESTION OF THE NEED FOR US BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES, MARCOS NOTED THAT PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, NOTABLY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ENRILE AND SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ROMULO, BELIEVE THE BASES ARE MORE VALUABLE TO THE US THAN TO THE PHILIPPINES. MARCOS REPEATED THAT THE PHILIPPINES IS WILLING TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD PEACE IF THE PHILIPPINES DETERMINES THAT THE BASES PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN PRESERVING GLOBAL SECURITY. BUT THIS DETERMINATION WILL BE MADE IN LIGHT OF THE NEEDS AND POSSIBLE COSTS TO
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THE PHILIPPINES.

7. COMMENT: DESPITE THE RANCOR WHICH HAS MARKED PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS WITH THE FOREIGN PRESS,

THE NEWS CONFERENCE WAS CONDUCTED IN POLITE THOUGH FORMAL

TERMS. MARCOS, ACCORDING TO ONE PARTICIPANT, WAS RELAXED
AND SELF-CONFIDENT. AFTER ABOUT AN HOUR AND A HALF THE
NEWS CONFERENCE ADJOURNED TO MORE CASUAL CIRCUMSTANCES
AND MARCOS JOINED THE PRESS FOR A LATE AFTERNOON SNACK.
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Message Attributes

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